

# Another Mandate for Steinbrenner

**W**ITH every whirl of the turnstiles, the Yankee fans have given George Steinbrenner another mandate to improve the team in the free-agent market, even if the Yankees win the World Series.

Perhaps more than any other major league club owner, George Steinbrenner understands his responsibility to those who really pay a baseball team's bills. When he signed Bob Watson for four years at \$2,160,000 and Rudy May for three years at \$1 million following a record Yankee Stadium season attendance of 2,537,765 last year, the Yankees' principal owner talked about how the club had to put its profits into signing free agents to reward their fans' loyalty.

With its philosophy of spending money to make money, the Yankees' profit margin figures to be even higher this year when the free-agent auctions begin. Already the Yankees are whispered to be interested primarily in Dusty Baker, the Los Angeles Dodgers left fielder.

With a season home attendance of 2,374,094 after yesterday's game with the Boston Red Sox, the Yankees almost surely will break last year's club record and also threaten to surpass the American League record of 2,620,627, set by the Cleveland Indians in 1948.

"We have a shot at it," says Cedric Tallis, the Yankees' executive vice president. "But one rainout would finish us."

After the Red Sox series, the Yankees have four games here with the Cleveland Indians, beginning tomorrow night, and four with the Detroit Tigers over the final weekend of the season. To break the league home-attendance record, they would need to average nearly 25,000 for each of those eight games — a number that might depend on the suspense in the American League East race.

"Whether we break the record or not," Tallis says, "the New York



The New York Times / Larry C. Morris

**The Yankees have a chance to surpass the American League home-attendance record of 2,620,627, set by the Cleveland Indians in 1948.**

baseball fan amazes me. Most of them come by subway. And those who drive often get into traffic jams. I don't think enough people appreciate the enthusiasm of the New York baseball fan."

The Yankees' treasury appreciates it. Counting what they spend on concessions, every Yankee Stadium customer leaves an average of about \$8 at a game. After deducting the visiting club's share and the league share, the Yankees keep an average of nearly \$6 per customer. With an assured attendance of 2.5 million, that's a gross of \$15 million. Add to that the Yankees' television-and-radio revenue.

So much for the finances. More important than the games themselves is the emotion generated by all those fans.

"I don't know how you can actually

measure it," says Dick Howser, the Yankees' manager. "But it has to help."

Some Yankee players believe that their loyalists contributed to their 8-7 victory Thursday night over Toronto.

"When we needed four runs to tie that game in the 10th inning, everybody was hollering and screaming," Ron Guidry says. "That helps to keep things going. But maybe I noticed it more because I wasn't involved. I know when I'm pitching, I don't hear the crowd, no matter how loud it is. Out on the mound, all that noise just sounds like distant thunder."

Yet Ron Guidry is aware of having prompted what is now a Yankee tradition — the crowd standing and stomping and shouting when a Yankee pitcher has two strikes on the opposing batter who looms as the final out.

"They started that with me two years ago whenever I had two strikes on anybody," Ron Guidry says. "And it really helps when you're trying to get the last out. If we're ahead by two or three runs and there's nobody on, all that batter wants to do is take a big swing, and if he hits it out, fine; if not, take the strikeout and go home."

Tommy John, who was with the Los Angeles Dodgers when they drew a major league record 3.3 million in 1978, believes the Yankee fans are "more boisterous" than Dodger fans.

"The crowds are more subdued in Dodger Stadium," the 37-year-old left-hander says. "Out there, going to Dodger games is the thing to do. But it's easier to go to games there, too — Dodger Stadium is the best ball park with the best food and the best parking in baseball. And they're also guaranteed the best weather."

The weather is one reason why the Dodgers have the highest season-ticket sale in baseball — about 20,000. The neighboring California Angels are next with nearly 17,000. The Yankees, in contrast, sold about 8,000 season tickets this year.

"But the big thing about the Yankee fans to me this year," Reggie Jackson says, "is that they've been positive toward me all season. My first year here, in 1977, they were negative to me sometimes and that preyed on my mind. But even in the slump I'm in now, the fans have been positive, never negative. I appreciate that."

In addition, there are those Yankee fans (and those Yankee haters) in other American League cities who contributed to the Yankees setting a major league road-attendance record this year with 2,350,991, with five dates in Cleveland and Detroit remaining. The 1978 Cincinnati Reds had attracted 2,320,616.

As the recipient of the visiting clubs' share, that's another \$2 million added to the mandate that George Steinbrenner has.